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# NAGGING THE JAPANESE

BY FRANCIS G. PEABODY

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AN American who has spent the spring months of this year in Japan and returns this summer through California encounters a sharp sea-change of public opinion. In Japan, among responsible people, the anti-Japanese legislation of California created a general sense of bewilderment. The United States had been regarded as the most disinterested and trustworthy of Western nations. A monument to Commodore Perry had been recently unveiled. A "Gentlemen's Agreement" had checked the migration to America, so that the number of Japanese in California had decreased by four thousand nine hundred and thirty-three during the last three years. The holdings of land by Japanese in 1910 amounted to but twelve thousand seven hundred and twenty-six acres, or about one per cent. of the twelve million acres of agricultural land. The purposes of the Japanese Government were conspicuously directed to the promoting of emigration to Korea and Manchuria rather than to the West. Suddenly, and with no apparent provocation, California descended on this insignificant number of Japanese settlers with legislation which was practically confiscation. The prevailing public opinion in California, with many exceptions of individuals and neighborhoods, seemed to be made up in about equal parts of racial prejudice and economic fear. All Orientals, it was often maintained, were unclean and immoral, and their presence was a threat to our families and children. This was a white man's country. The Japanese, it was more particularly urged, were undesirable citizens because they were so industrious and acquisitive. They make a living where a white man would starve. They lease a bit of unproductive land, and soon they own it, and the next piece, too. They crowd out white competition in the fisheries, the potato fields, and the market-gardens. Thus a

question of land-holding which, after twenty years remained insignificant, and which showed no signs of immediate gravity, was magnified in the public press into "a horde of settlers," "a strangle-hold on the State," "the grip the Japanese are securing." The consequence was a policy which may be described as nagging the Japanese. Precisely as in a home there may be no legitimate ground for divorce, but life may be made miserable by petty irritations and insults, so California, being precluded by treaty from direct discrimination, proceeded to make life as uncomfortable as possible for a handful of Japanese, and to treat a proud and friendly nation as though it were a nation of lepers. Some of the talk which one might hear in California was of the loosest and most reckless description. A wall, it was half humorously said, ought to be built round the State, and its resources reserved for its own people.

Here, then, is a situation which takes on a wholly different look when seen from opposite sides of the ocean. What to California is a local irritation created by a few objectionable settlers is regarded in Japan as a national insult. To the Japanese our Federal system is almost incomprehensible. In a nation where loyalty to the throne is an overmastering passion, the conception of a divided authority, permitting one section of a country to oppose or thwart the will of the rest, seems like governmental chaos, and the impression persists that somehow California might be overruled. A nagging policy is therefore the most irritating that could be devised. Exclusion would be more endurable to the Japanese than insinuation. If a proud and sensitive country should be goaded to retaliation, it would be because it had been treated superciliously, and because the Government at Washington moves so slowly in reparation, if indeed it is moving at all. Here is the gravity of the case; and until the issue is dealt with, not as a tool of local politics, but as a case of international comity, no satisfaction is likely to be felt in Japan. One State may do the nagging, but the whole country has to bear the blame. One State might involve us in a war which, as a San Francisco newspaper remarked, would make California "an object of derision from Bangor to New Orleans"; yet even then it would be difficult to follow the suggestion of an Oregon newspaper, and "let California do the fighting, while the other States look on." It is high time, then, to consider what are

the elements in the problem which should be clearly recognized, if a policy of local nagging is to be supplanted by a policy of sane diplomacy.

The first of these conditions of settlement is an appreciation of the fact that we are dealing with an equal. It is often remarked with amusement by the Japanese that the Western nations did not think them worthy of respect until they had killed a great number of Russians. That achievement suddenly called to the attention of the West a people whose culture had its Golden Age before America was discovered, and whose arts, crafts, philosophies, passionate love of natural beauty, and not less passionate patriotism are quite without parallel in the world. The victory of Germany over France in 1871 was not unreasonably described as a victory of the universities. War had become an applied science, and soldiers were scholars. The same results of universal and scientific education were exhibited by Japan in war, and are now to be witnessed in the amazing industrial expansion which has followed war. Sixty years in Japan have accomplished in large degree what took six hundred years in Europe,—the transition from a feudal system, with its lords and vassals, its stationary civilization and mediæval virtues, to a modern State, with parliament, suffrage, freedom of religion and of the press. Admiral Mahan, in his forcible argument for exclusion, has remarked that an Oriental civilization may be equal to ours, but is different. The converse proposition is not less important for the moment to enforce. Because the Japanese are different from Californians, it does not follow that they are inferior. The obvious fact is, that much of the hostility to Japanese in California is a testimony to their excellence. Earlier immigrants who do not work as hard or as skilfully find themselves beaten in industrial competition, and cry out that the nation is in danger. It would be much more just, and much more welcome to the Japanese, if it were frankly said: "You are too clever for American citizenship. We are afraid of your extraordinary persistence and industry. Our only chance to survive is to keep you out."

A second step in adjusting this issue may be taken by a revision of our laws of immigration and naturalization. The practices now followed have become quite absurd and archaic. We recognize white and black; but when the Fifteenth Amendment was passed the yellow race had not

risen above our horizon. We accept as citizens the off-scourings of Eastern Europe, and shut our door on the thrifty Japanese, whose color may be no darker, and whose descent may be from much the same original stock. What nags the Japanese in the matter is the indirect insinuation of bad blood, the intimation that a people whose education is compulsory and self-help is universal may not prove as serviceable elements in a commercial democracy as the average of Syrians or Copts; that, in short, the Far East is intrinsically inferior to the Near East. To restrict immigration to definite, and even very small, numbers, of each nationality; to require satisfactory passports; to enforce sanitary regulations; to compel not only naturalization in the United States, but denaturalization in the country abandoned; all these might be reasonable precautions; but to discriminate between shades of skin, or assume that a passenger arriving through the Panama Canal is desirable and a passenger crossing the Pacific is a menace, is not so much statesmanship as stupidity. A policy of strict limitation and rigid selection equitably applied would be much more tolerable to a proud nation than the present practice of international insult.

It has been said in California, and even in Congress, that Japan herself denies to aliens the right of land-ownership, and that retaliation at this point is therefore justifiable; but this statement, though it has the form of truth, is in fact a most unfortunate misrepresentation of the declared purpose of Japan. It is true that under the law of 1873 it was "forbidden to sell or pawn land to foreigners"; but even under that earlier law a foreigner in the open ports and in Tokio might lease land "in perpetuity"; and by a law of 1894 these leases "granted in perpetuity by the Japanese Government to aliens and alien corporations shall be considered rights of possession, and ruled by the provisions of the civil law of Japan." Thus, for example, the property of the Unitarian Mission in Tokio is leased for ninety-nine years to Rev.<sup>d</sup> C. E. St. John, now of Philadelphia, but formerly Secretary of the American Unitarian Association in Boston; while the large property of the Doshisha University in Kyoto is held in perpetuity by a corporation. It is a curious commentary on the supposed prohibition by Japan of alien ownership that a very considerable proportion of the most desirable areas of Tokio are at this moment

occupied by the extensive grounds of foreign Embassies and of Christian mission stations, without any apprehension of insecurity in tenure.

But this is not the end of the Japanese policy. On April 13, 1911, a new law passed the Diet and was promulgated, providing that "foreigners domiciled in Japan and foreign corporations registered in Japan have the right to own land in Japan, provided that Japanese subjects or corporations enjoy the like privilege in such foreign country." Article II, however, of this law prescribed that "The date of enforcement of this law is to be fixed by Imperial decree"; and this Imperial sanction, though it is regarded as a merely formal endorsement, has been thus far delayed, partly, perhaps, because of the death of the late Emperor, and partly because of the slow processes of diplomatic correspondence with other countries concerning the privileges therein granted to Japanese. The California agitation, therefore, instead of recognizing this declared intention of Japan, has taken advantage of a moment of transition to propose retaliation against a policy which the Japanese Government has definitely abandoned, and which even under the earlier law was more nominal than real.

A third contribution to sanity and prudence in dealing with this issue may be suggested by considering the possible alternatives to the present friendly relations with Japan. If it be true that the world's trade is soon to seek the Pacific Ocean; that, as one hears in California, "The United States faces West"; if the Golden Gate is the gate of the future; then it certainly seems a questionable policy to irritate our nearest customer by nagging legislation. There has been some talk in Japan of a boycott on Californian trade and the diverting of commerce to northern ports, and though this would involve much loss on both sides, the sacrifice would be as nothing to the Japanese if their honor were involved. As to war itself, it should be understood that all responsible people in Japan regard the question as altogether beyond the sphere of practical politics, and as simply offering an opportunity, on both sides of the ocean, for irresponsible oratory. The notion of a formidable fleet venturing six thousand miles from its base to attack the American Republic seems in Japan as fantastic a nightmare as ever the advocates of a great American navy dreamed. A war with the United States, it is appreciated,

would mean in the end the extinction of Japan as a nation, though probably not at the hands of the United States. On the other hand, it is not unreasonable to speculate what the provocation of conflict by a nagging policy, if imagined as possible, might mean for the United States.

Japan is not a warlike nation. Her gifts and tastes are for the arts of peace, and all her capital—and much more—is needed for the industrial development which is one of the miracles of the modern world. None the less, Japan has shown that she can fight for her life, and has given evidence of a patriotism which totally disregards defeat or death. If it were conceivable that she should be goaded beyond endurance, she could without serious effort take the Philippines, and perhaps get temporary possession of the Hawaiian Islands, she could then sit still and wait; and the United States would have on its hands a war of retaliation and recovery. And what a war! The vastness, dubiousness—not to say the wickedness—of such an enterprise make it not so much a political possibility as a rhetorical opportunity.

And what, still further, would be the effect of war, or even of the talk of war, on the now promising work of Christian missions? Millions of American dollars and hundreds of American lives have been consecrated to the service of Christ in Japan; and these Christian missions have been received with respectful attention by statesmen and philosophers as well as by plain people. It would be a strange ending to this story of increasing fellowship and confidence if the same nation which had found a welcome in Japan for its messengers of brotherhood and peace should despatch thither as their successors, its messengers of devastation. A Tokio newspaper, appreciating this cynical contrast between missions and militarism, recently remarked, in an editorial on "The Heathen Americans": "Where is there any proof that the United States is a Christian country? Christianity teaches the principle of righteousness. Whoever acts in defiance of this principle cannot be called a Christian. The Americans send their missionaries to Japan; but a time may come when we shall have to instruct them in the teachings of God."

We are brought by these considerations to a fourth, and the most important, means to a better understanding,—namely, a better acquaintance. Charles Lamb is reported to have said of a neighbor, "I hate that man." "How can

you hate him?" said a friend, "You do not even know him." "That is precisely the reason," answered Lamb. If I knew him, I probably should not hate him." The same ground for hate exists very generally in the United States. A long-standing and industriously propagated tradition has pronounced the Japanese a slippery and tricky people, or, as Mr. Chesterton once said, appropriating the name of the Japanese system of wrestling, which wins by yielding, "A Judo civilization." Now there are no doubt many tricky people in Japan; and the ancient hierarchy of occupations which put trade in the lowest place, as if no gentleman would think of money-making, tended no doubt to drop the least honorable type into business. It should be remembered, however, that precisely the same reputation for tricky trading is still generally supposed by the world to be characteristic of the Yankees, and still affects with extreme caution both commercial and diplomatic relations between other countries and the United States. It must be further appreciated that the new expansion of business in Japan has developed a new type of business men, who administer great affairs in as scrupulous and honorable a manner as can anywhere be found. The leading banker, often described as the Morgan of Japan, narrated not long ago to a few friends the story of his career, and his deliberate decision to forego the tastes which led him to the field of government or diplomacy, because, as he said, the new needs of his country called for a new form of service, and he could serve her best as a man of business. The same hasty judgment is often built in the United States on the ancient myth, which I have heard repeated four times within a few weeks, to the effect that Japanese bankers have to employ Chinese cashiers, because their own people cannot be trusted,—a tale which, whatever may once have been the case, has now scarcely more foundation than if it were said that Chinamen were called in to balance the sales of Wall Street. It may be true that the type of Japanese settler who has taken up land in California is apt to be pushing, suspicious, and even unscrupulous; but it would be strange indeed if any type except one not much desired at home could be tempted to settle where every possible means of force and law is employed to annoy and eject. The fact is, then, that we do not know the Japanese as they know us; and do not credit them, as they do us, with generous or even respectable motives. Their



students run every risk of poverty and insult that they may have the chance to learn our sciences; but what do our students know of their subtle philosophies and tranquillizing religions? Their art has qualities which in their own sphere are unique and supreme, yet Japanese art still remains the precious possession of connoisseurs, and is purposely debased and vulgarized in order to meet American taste. They receive American travelers, physicians, and missionaries, not only with toleration, but with extreme teachableness, while the great majority of Americans either fancy the Japanese to be heathen, in their blindness, bowing down to wood and stone, or classify them roughly with Chinamen, whom they resemble in character and temperament about as much as a Frenchman does a Turk.

It is interesting to observe that at this moment, when national irritation would seem to preclude international co-operation, the Japanese are, in two distinct enterprises, indicating their unalterable friendship. The first is the provision of twenty thousand dollars, one-half contributed by Japanese and their friends in the United States and the other half subscribed in Japan itself, to send a series of Japanese professors to lecture at Harvard University and elsewhere in the United States. Exchange-professors have for some years come and gone between this country, Germany, and France. This year one of the most learned and most charming of the staff in the Imperial University in Tokio, a professor of the history of religions and a Buddhist, will lecture in the United States on the history of religion and morals among the Japanese. No one who may have the privilege of hearing Professor Anesaki will be likely to think lightly of a nation whose culture has reached such breadth and depth, and his visit may in many indirect but effective ways contribute to international comity.

A second and more comprehensive scheme for a better understanding between East and West is the formation in Japan, with the concurrence of many scholars in European countries as well as in the United States, of an "Association Concordia," organized to unite scholars, teachers, and men of affairs in the service of common ideals of culture and faith. A representative of this Association has already visited the Western countries, and has obtained the written approval of a large body of distinguished colleagues, and the monthly meetings of the Japanese society in Tokio al-

ready draw together an important group of leading men. This Association is an organized expression of reaction from the materialized and commercial view of progress to a faith in moral and spiritual ideals as the basis of permanent welfare. The issue between commercialism and idealism, which thoughtful people in all countries recognize as critical, is felt with special acuteness in Japan. A great tide of industrial development threatens to submerge the ancient landmarks of religion and ethics, and as the Japanese look across to other nations they see much the same problem there. They approach, therefore, a revival of idealism as an international task, to be promoted by the co-operation of many minds in many lands, by the publication of a Review devoted to comparative studies in philosophy, sociology, education, literature, and religion; by the provision of courses of lectures and exchanges of professors and of students; and finally, by the establishment of an International Institute, as a clearing-house of information and intercourse. Politicians and "practical" men may be sceptical concerning such an association of idealists in an age controlled by tariffs and trades; but those in many countries who believe that the progress of civilization is finally determined, not by commerce or navies, but by the intercommunication of moral ideals and intellectual sympathies, will find their faith confirmed by the establishment of the Association Concordia, and will be likely to feel an increasing respect for the nation in which this world-movement began.

In ways of which these enterprises of scholars are illustrations, ways which are indirect but educative, ways which are gradual but comprehensive, it may come to pass that a better understanding between East and West may follow a better acquaintance, and that a local policy of nagging may be superseded by an international policy of honorable and equitable peace.

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